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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further action and initiatives: women's human rights and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls as defined in the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the special session of the General Assembly

Statement submitted by the National Women's Council of Catalonia, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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Introduction

On the occasion of the forty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women, it is fitting to recall the many texts on the elimination of violence against women, in particular the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, the Beijing Declaration, and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security. The Consell nacional de dones de Catalunya (National Women's Council of Catalonia), a governmental advisory body recognized by the United Nations as having consultative status with the Economic Social and Council, which represents 150 organizations numbering more than 30,000 women at this forty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women expresses its concern at the persisting infringement of the rights of women through all forms of violence, in

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particular gender and domestic violence, with its irreversible physical and mental impact on the lives of millions.

Guiding principles

The National Women's Council of Catalonia declares that gender violence is one of the most covered up and socially tolerated crimes in the world.

We know that domestic violence is a particularly perverse form of gender violence, since it occurs in the place where women and children should feel safest.

We know that there is no country or society that can claim an absence of domestic violence; and that domestic violence is a universal phenomenon that does not depend on culture, class, education, economic level, ethnicity or age.

We nevertheless recognize that countries have made significant progress in recognizing and dealing with this problem. Replies are currently being received at the international, national and regional levels, both from Governments and from non-governmental organizations that assist women and promote their advancement. Yet, despite a global social consensus on the need to address domestic violence, the human rights of women continue to be violated or insufficiently promoted, protected and respected throughout the world.

Consequently, we must forge a broad consensus to end violence against women which will include guidelines, legislative models, education, training and documentation, and any other means to ensure that it is eliminated.

In our view, those guidelines, models and procedures must take into account the points set out below, and Governments must assume responsibility for their implementation.

Recommendations

Legal, judicial and police measures

Practical measures must be introduced which define domestic violence as a specific crime, and which address not only physical violence but also sexual and psychological violence.

Appropriate measures must be taken to initiate procedures in preparation for a pre-trial hearing followed by a criminal trial, on the basis of a court action brought by an individual or by health or social service professionals involved.

Legal measures must be taken to ensure an effective and coordinated response by the legal, police and health services involved in domestic violence proceedings.

Appropriate mechanisms and measures must be established to allow judicial proceedings to advance as rapidly as possible in cases involving violence against women, especially those likely to suffer further abuse in the interval between the opening of the trial and the date of the sentence.

Special units must be created to care for victims in law enforcement and court facilities.

Precautions must be taken to keep the perpetrator away from the family home in the interest of protecting the victim. Measures must also be taken to ensure the safety of victims, and to prevent secondary victimization.

With a view to adopting those legal measures, Governments must agree to:

- Adopt comprehensive action plans against violence as models of good practice, and enact integrated laws prohibiting violence against women.

It is nonetheless clear that the law alone, disconnected from the rest of society, has little value unless accompanied by campaigns to raise awareness about domestic violence. Such campaigns should be designed to:

- Promote understanding of the causes of violence against women, with special attention to the impact of such violence on the unequal distribution of power between men and women.
- Promote public awareness that women are victims of violence simply because they are women.
- Try to convince the victims that they are not alone, and inform them of their rights, the procedures they must follow, and the resources available to them.
- Work to overcome sexist stereotypes and beliefs that lead to outbreaks of violence in the home.
- Sensitize the media to their responsibility to serve as a vehicle for transmitting values based on respect for women's rights.

Education and training

The crucial role played by education in the eradication of violence against women must be recognized, since education is a basic tool for altering attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate sexism and gender violence.

With a view to preventing violence against women through education, the following measures should be adopted:

- Incorporate the fight against sexism and violence into school curricula, and teach students to detect and confront problems that lead to sexism and gender violence.
- Build equality between boys and girls on a daily basis, by creating cooperative experiences designed to surmount the conditions that underlie violence against women, namely, the unequal distribution of power, and the resistance, especially by men, to remedying that inequality.
- Design tools for identifying the boy and girl students in the school who are victims of violence, with a view to preventing the detrimental effects of such behaviour and the likelihood that it will recur.
- Create the necessary conditions for schools to implement effective programmes for the prevention of violence against women, and provide training in theory and in practice, for the teachers who are to execute the programmes.

Specialized training for professionals caring for victims

- Include courses about violence against women in required job training for professionals working with victims, and periodically provide continuing education or refresher courses for them.

Resources and social services for victims

- All countries should set up a network of shelters and alternatives to institutionalization for victims and their children, where they can stay as long as necessary and receive comprehensive care.
- All services and programmes should aim to help women to recover, to organize their lives independently from that of the perpetrator, and to secure a job that will allow them to do so.
- Procedures should be established to assist specific groups to overcome difficulties, like for instance, immigrant women whose legal situation is irregular.
- Services should be set up for the treatment of women victims of violence, on the basis of institutional cooperation, particularly that of non-governmental organizations, creating cooperation mechanisms combining the efforts of Governments, institutions and society.

Rehabilitation of perpetrators

- Rehabilitation programmes for perpetrators, including monitoring and evaluation, should be developed, in order to ensure the safety of women.
- Such programmes are essential in order to help perpetrators to accept their responsibility, and not minimize or justify their behaviour. Rehabilitation programmes for perpetrators should never be substitutes for punishment.
- Rehabilitation of perpetrators must provide mechanisms to ensure that the victim's safety and well-being are never endangered.

The primary objective of such programmes should be the re-education of violent men by changing attitudes that led to violence.

Lastly, the measures described should include studies and research on all forms of violence in order to understand the causes and take measures to wipe it out.

Consequently we urge all States members to be aware of the magnitude of the problem and urgently to undertake all measures and policies described in the Recommendations section of this document, with a view to eliminating violence against all the women of the world irrespective of their race, social status or sexual preference.